

CLAIMS

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1. A method of issuing a digital license to a customer for a corresponding piece of digital content, the content originating from a retailer, the method comprising:

receiving a license request for the license from the customer,
10 the request including retailer information associated with the corresponding piece
of digital content and identifying the retailer;

receiving a payment from the customer in connection with the license request;

retrieving the retailer information from the license request and
15 identifying the retailer therefrom; and
crediting the identified retailer for a portion of the payment
received.

2. The method of claim 1 wherein crediting the retailer

20 comprises recording the retailer information in a database for accounting and payment distribution purposes, the database including an entry for each retailer information, each entry including a count for counting the number of times a license has been issued for the specific retailer information combination, such recording comprising:

25 finding the retailer information entry in the database corresponding to the retailer information of the request, or creating such sub-entry if none is present; and

incrementing the count in such entry.

3. The method of claim 2 wherein crediting the identified retailer comprises crediting the retailer according to the count in the entry.

4. The method of claim 1 comprising:
5 receiving a license request for the license from the customer, the request including retailer information associated with the corresponding piece of digital content and identifying the retailer, and a content identification identifying the content, the method further comprising:
retrieving the content identification from the license request
10 and identifying the content therefrom;
the method comprising crediting the identified retailer for a portion of the payment received according to the identified content.

5. The method of claim 4 further comprising recording the
15 retailer information and content identification in a database for accounting and payment distribution purposes, the database including an entry for each content identification, each content identification entry including a sub-entry for each retailer information related to such content identification, each sub-entry including a count for counting the number of times a license has been issued for the
20 specific content identification – retailer information combination, such recording comprising:

finding the content identification entry in the database
corresponding to the content identification of the request, or creating such entry if none is present;
25 finding, under such content identification entry, the retailer information sub-entry in the database corresponding to the retailer information of the request, or creating such sub-entry if none is present; and
incrementing the count in such sub-entry.

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6. The method of claim 5 wherein crediting the identified retailer comprises crediting the retailer according to the count in the sub-entry.

7. The method of claim 4 comprising:

5 receiving a license request for the license from the customer, the request including retailer information associated with the corresponding piece of digital content and identifying the retailer, a content identification identifying the content, and content distribution information associated with the corresponding piece of digital content and uniquely identifying the content as distributed by the

10 retailer, the method further comprising:

retrieving the content distribution information from the license request and identifying the content as distributed by the retailer therefrom; the method comprising crediting the identified retailer for a portion of the payment received according to the identified content and identified content as distributed

15 by the retailer.

8. The method of claim 7 further comprising recording the retailer information, content identification, and content distribution information in a database for accounting and payment distribution purposes, the database

20 including an entry for each content identification, each content identification entry including a sub-entry for each customer distribution information and retailer information combination related to such content identification, each sub-entry including a count for counting the number of times a license has been issued for the specific content identification – customer distribution information – retailer

25 information combination, such recording comprising:

finding the content identification entry in the database corresponding to the content identification of the request, or creating such entry if none is present;

finding, under such content identification entry, the customer

30 distribution information – retailer information sub-entry in the database

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corresponding to the customer distribution information – retailer information of the request, or creating such sub-entry if none is present; and

incrementing the count in such sub-entry.

5 9. The method of claim 8 wherein crediting the identified retailer
comprises crediting the retailer according to the count in the sub-entry.

10. The method of claim 7 wherein receiving the license request comprises receiving the license request as addressed to a site identified by a site identifier, the site identifier including the content distribution information attached thereto, and wherein retrieving the content distribution information comprises retrieving the content distribution information as attached to the site identifier.

11. The method of claim 1 further comprising issuing the license.

12. The method of claim 1 wherein receiving the license request comprises receiving the license request as addressed to a site identified by a site identifier, the site identifier including the retailer information attached thereto, and wherein retrieving the retailer information comprises retrieving the retailer information as attached to the site identifier.

13. A method of distributing digital content from a retailer to a customer, the method comprising:

retrieving the content as issued by a content provider, the as

25 issued content having license acquisition information for acquiring a corresponding license attached thereto, the license acquisition information including a site identifier identifying a site at which the customer may obtain a digital license corresponding to the content, the site identifier in the license acquisition information attached to the as issued content including an additional

30 information field attached thereto;

modifying such additional information field to include retailer information identifying the retailer; and

delivering the content with the modified additional information field to the customer,

5 whereby a license request sent from the customer is addressed to the site
identified by the site identifier in the license acquisition information and includes
the modified additional information field attached thereto.

14. The method of claim 13 wherein modifying such additional
10 information field comprises modifying such additional information field to include
content distribution information uniquely identifying the content as distributed by
the retailer.

15 15. The method of claim 13 wherein modifying such additional information field comprises modifying such additional information field to include a digital signature based at least in part on a portion of the modified additional information field.

16. The method of claim 13 wherein the retailer is the content
20 provider.

17. The method of claim 13 wherein the retailer distributes the content to the customer without collecting any license fee therefrom.

25 18. A computer-readable medium having computer-executable instructions thereon for issuing a digital license to a customer for a corresponding piece of digital content, the content originating from a retailer, the instructions comprising modules including:

a first module for receiving a license request for the license from the customer, the request including retailer information associated with the corresponding piece of digital content and identifying the retailer;

5 a second module for receiving a payment from the customer in connection with license request;

a third module for retrieving the retailer information from the license request and identifying the retailer therefrom; and

a fourth module for crediting the identified retailer for a portion of the payment received.

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19. The medium of claim 18 wherein the fourth module records the retailer information in a database for accounting and payment distribution purposes, the database including an entry for each retailer information, each entry including a count for counting the number of times a license has been issued for the specific retailer information combination, the fourth module including:

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a first sub-module for finding the retailer information entry in the database corresponding to the retailer information of the request, or creating such sub-entry if none is present; and

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a second sub-module for incrementing the count in such entry.

20. The medium of claim 19 wherein the fourth module credits the retailer according to the count in the entry.

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21. The medium of claim 18 comprising:
the first module for receiving a license request for the license from the customer, the request including retailer information associated with the corresponding piece of digital content and identifying the retailer, and a content identification identifying the content, the medium further comprising:

a fifth module for retrieving the content identification from the license request and identifying the content therefrom;
the fourth module crediting the identified retailer for a portion of the payment received according to the identified content.

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22. The medium of claim 21 wherein the fourth module records the retailer information and content identification in a database for accounting and payment distribution purposes, the database including an entry for each content identification, each content identification entry including a sub-entry for each retailer information related to such content identification, each sub-entry including a count for counting the number of times a license has been issued for the specific content identification – retailer information combination, the fourth module including:

10 a first sub-module for finding the content identification entry in the database corresponding to the content identification of the request, or creating such entry if none is present;

15 a second sub-module for finding, under such content identification entry, the retailer information sub-entry in the database corresponding to the retailer information of the request, or creating such sub-entry if none is present; and

20 a third sub-module for incrementing the count in such sub-entry.

23. The medium of claim 22 wherein the fourth module credits the retailer according to the count in the sub-entry.

24. The medium of claim 21 comprising:
the first module for receiving a license request for the license from the customer, the request including retailer information associated with the
30 corresponding piece of digital content and identifying the retailer, a content

identification identifying the content, and content distribution information associated with the corresponding piece of digital content and uniquely identifying the content as distributed by the retailer, the medium further comprising:

a fifth module for retrieving the content distribution

5 information from the license request and identifying the content as distributed by
the retailer therefrom;

the fourth module crediting the identified retailer for a portion of the payment received according to the identified content and identified content as distributed by the retailer.

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25. The medium of claim 24 wherein the fourth module records the retailer information, content identification, and content distribution information in a database for accounting and payment distribution purposes, the database including an entry for each content identification, each content identification entry including a sub-entry for each customer distribution information and retailer information combination related to such content identification, each sub-entry including a count for counting the number of times a license has been issued for the specific content identification – customer distribution information – retailer information combination, the fourth module including:

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a first sub-module for finding the content identification entry in the database corresponding to the content identification of the request, or creating such entry if none is present;

a second sub-module for finding, under such content identification entry, the customer distribution information – retailer information

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sub-entry in the database corresponding to the customer distribution information – retailer information of the request, or creating such sub-entry if none is present;
and

a third module for incrementing the count in such sub-entry.

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26. The medium of claim 25 wherein the fourth module credits the retailer according to the count in the sub-entry.

27. The medium of claim 24 wherein the first module receives the
5 license request as addressed to a site identified by a site identifier, the site identifier including the content distribution information attached thereto, and wherein the fifth module retrieves the content distribution information as attached to the site identifier.

10 28. The medium of claim 18 further comprising a fifth module for issuing the license.

29. The medium of claim 18 wherein the first module receives as
15 addressed to a site identified by a site identifier, the site identifier including the retailer information attached thereto, and wherein the third module retrieves as attached to the site identifier.

30. A computer-readable medium having computer-executable
instructions thereon for distributing digital content from a retailer to a customer,
20 the instructions comprising modules including:

a first module for retrieving the content as issued by a content
provider, the as issued content having license acquisition information for acquiring
a corresponding license attached thereto, the license acquisition information
including a site identifier identifying a site at which the customer may obtain a
25 digital license corresponding to the content, the site identifier in the license
acquisition information attached to the as issued content including an additional
information field attached thereto;

a second module for modifying such additional information
field to include retailer information identifying the retailer; and

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a third module for delivering the content with the modified additional information field to the customer,
whereby a license request sent from the customer is addressed to the site identified by the site identifier in the license acquisition information and includes
5 the modified additional information field attached thereto.

31. The medium of claim 30 wherein the second module modifies such additional information field to include content distribution information uniquely identifying the content as distributed by the retailer.

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32. The medium of claim 30 wherein the second module modifies such additional information field to include a digital signature based at least in part on a portion of the modified additional information field.

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33. The medium of claim 30 wherein the retailer is the content provider.

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34. The medium of claim 30 wherein the third module distributes the content to the customer without any license fee being collected therefrom.

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35. A computer having computer-executable instructions thereon for issuing a digital license to a customer for a corresponding piece of digital content, the content originating from a retailer, the instructions comprising modules including:

a first module receiving a license request for the license from the customer, the request including retailer information associated with the corresponding piece of digital content and identifying the retailer;

a second module receiving a payment from the customer in connection with license request;

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a third module retrieving the retailer information from the license request and identifying the retailer therefrom; and

a fourth module crediting the identified retailer for a portion of the payment received.

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36. The computer of claim 35 wherein the fourth module records the retailer information in a database for accounting and payment distribution purposes, the database including an entry for each retailer information, each entry including a count for counting the number of times a license has been issued for the specific retailer information combination, the fourth module including:

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a first sub-module finding the retailer information entry in the database corresponding to the retailer information of the request, or creating such sub-entry if none is present; and

a second sub-module incrementing the count in such entry.

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37. The computer of claim 36 wherein the fourth module credits the retailer according to the count in the entry.

38. The computer of claim 35 comprising:

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the first module receiving a license request for the license from the customer, the request including retailer information associated with the corresponding piece of digital content and identifying the retailer, and a content identification identifying the content, the medium further comprising:

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a fifth module retrieving the content identification from the license request and identifying the content therefrom;
the fourth module crediting the identified retailer for a portion of the payment received according to the identified content.

39. The computer of claim 38 wherein the fourth module records the retailer information and content identification in a database for accounting and

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payment distribution purposes, the database including an entry for each content identification, each content identification entry including a sub-entry for each retailer information related to such content identification, each sub-entry including a count for counting the number of times a license has been issued for the specific content identification – retailer information combination, the fourth module including:

a first sub-module finding the content identification entry in the database corresponding to the content identification of the request, or creating such entry if none is present;

a second sub-module finding, under such content identification entry, the retailer information sub-entry in the database corresponding to the retailer information of the request, or creating such sub-entry if none is present; and

a third sub-module incrementing the count in such sub-entry.

40. The computer of claim 39 wherein the fourth module credits the retailer according to the count in the sub-entry.

41. The computer of claim 38 comprising:
the first module receiving a license request for the license from the customer, the request including retailer information associated with the corresponding piece of digital content and identifying the retailer, a content identification identifying the content, and content distribution information associated with the corresponding piece of digital content and uniquely identifying the content as distributed by the retailer, the medium further comprising:

a fifth module retrieving the content distribution information from the license request and identifying the content as distributed by the retailer therefrom;

the fourth module crediting the identified retailer for a portion of the payment received according to the identified content and identified content as distributed by the retailer.

5 42. The computer of claim 41 wherein the fourth module records
the retailer information, content identification, and content distribution information
in a database for accounting and payment distribution purposes, the database
including an entry for each content identification, each content identification entry
including a sub-entry for each customer distribution information and retailer
10 information combination related to such content identification, each sub-entry
including a count for counting the number of times a license has been issued for
the specific content identification – customer distribution information – retailer
information combination, the fourth module including:
 a first sub-module finding the content identification entry in
15 the database corresponding to the content identification of the request, or creating
such entry if none is present;
 a second sub-module finding, under such content
identification entry, the customer distribution information – retailer information
sub-entry in the database corresponding to the customer distribution information –
20 retailer information of the request, or creating such sub-entry if none is present;
and

43. The computer of claim 42 wherein the fourth module credits
25 the retailer according to the count in the sub-entry.

44. The computer of claim 41 wherein the first module receives the license request as addressed to a site identified by a site identifier, the site identifier including the content distribution information attached thereto, and

wherein the fifth module retrieves the content distribution information as attached to the site identifier.

45. The computer of claim 35 further comprising a fifth module
5 issuing the license.

46. The computer of claim 35 wherein the first module receives as addressed to a site identified by a site identifier, the site identifier including the retailer information attached thereto, and wherein the third module retrieves as attached to the site identifier.

47. A computer having computer-executable instructions thereon for distributing digital content from a retailer to a customer, the instructions comprising modules including:

15 a first module retrieving the content as issued by a content provider, the as issued content having license acquisition information for acquiring a corresponding license attached thereto, the license acquisition information including a site identifier identifying a site at which the customer may obtain a digital license corresponding to the content, the site identifier in the license

20 acquisition information attached to the as issued content including an additional information field attached thereto:

a second module modifying such additional information field to include retailer information identifying the retailer; and

25 a third module delivering the content with the modified additional information field to the customer, whereby a license request sent from the customer is addressed to the site identified by the site identifier in the license acquisition information and includes the modified additional information field attached thereto.

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48. The computer of claim 47 wherein the second module modifies such additional information field to include content distribution information uniquely identifying the content as distributed by the retailer.

5 49. The computer of claim 47 wherein the second module
modifies such additional information field to include a digital signature based at
least in part on a portion of the modified additional information field.

10 50. The computer of claim 47 wherein the retailer is the content provider.

51. The computer of claim 47 wherein the third module distributes the content to the customer without any license fee being collected therefrom.

15 52. A method of issuing a digital license to a customer for a
corresponding piece of digital content, the content originating from a retailer, the
method comprising:

receiving a license request for the license from the customer,
the request including retailer information associated with the corresponding piece
20 of digital content and identifying the retailer;

receiving a payment from the customer in connection with the license request;

retrieving the retailer information from the license request and identifying the retailer therefrom; and

25 crediting the identified retailer for the requested license as
issued.

53. The method of claim 52 wherein crediting the retailer comprises recording the retailer information in a database for accounting purposes, the database including an entry for each retailer information, each entry

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including a count for counting the number of times a license has been issued for the specific retailer information combination, such recording comprising:

- finding the retailer information entry in the database
corresponding to the retailer information of the request, or creating such sub-entry
5 if none is present; and
incrementing the count in such entry.

10 54. The method of claim 53 wherein crediting the identified retailer comprises crediting the retailer according to the count in the entry.

55. The method of claim 52 comprising:
receiving a license request for the license from the customer,
the request including retailer information associated with the corresponding piece
of digital content and identifying the retailer, and a content identification identifying
15 the content, the method further comprising:
retrieving the content identification from the license request
and identifying the content therefrom;
the method comprising crediting the identified retailer according to the identified
content.

20 56. The method of claim 55 further comprising recording the retailer information and content identification in a database for accounting purposes, the database including an entry for each content identification, each content identification entry including a sub-entry for each retailer information
25 related to such content identification, each sub-entry including a count for counting the number of times a license has been issued for the specific content identification – retailer information combination, such recording comprising:
finding the content identification entry in the database
corresponding to the content identification of the request, or creating such entry if
30 none is present;

finding, under such content identification entry, the retailer information sub-entry in the database corresponding to the retailer information of the request, or creating such sub-entry if none is present; and
incrementing the count in such sub-entry.

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57. The method of claim 56 wherein crediting the identified retailer comprises crediting the retailer according to the count in the sub-entry.

58. The method of claim 55 comprising:
10 receiving a license request for the license from the customer,
the request including retailer information associated with the corresponding piece
of digital content and identifying the retailer, a content identification identifying the
content, and content distribution information associated with the corresponding
piece of digital content and uniquely identifying the content as distributed by the
15 retailer, the method further comprising:
retrieving the content distribution information from the license
request and identifying the content as distributed by the retailer therefrom;
the method comprising crediting the identified retailer according to the identified
content and identified content as distributed by the retailer.

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59. The method of claim 58 further comprising recording the retailer information, content identification, and content distribution information in a database for accounting purposes, the database including an entry for each content identification, each content identification entry including a sub-entry for each customer distribution information and retailer information combination related to such content identification, each sub-entry including a count for counting the number of times a license has been issued for the specific content identification – customer distribution information – retailer information combination, such recording comprising:

finding the content identification entry in the database corresponding to the content identification of the request, or creating such entry if none is present;

- 5 finding, under such content identification entry, the customer distribution information – retailer information sub-entry in the database corresponding to the customer distribution information – retailer information of the request, or creating such sub-entry if none is present; and
incrementing the count in such sub-entry.

10 60. The method of claim 59 wherein crediting the identified retailer comprises crediting the retailer according to the count in the sub-entry.

15 61. The method of claim 58 wherein receiving the license request comprises receiving the license request as addressed to a site identified by a site identifier, the site identifier including the content distribution information attached thereto, and wherein retrieving the content distribution information comprises retrieving the content distribution information as attached to the site identifier.

20 62. The method of claim 52 further comprising issuing the license.

25 63. The method of claim 52 wherein receiving the license request comprises receiving the license request as addressed to a site identified by a site identifier, the site identifier including the retailer information attached thereto, and wherein retrieving the retailer information comprises retrieving the retailer information as attached to the site identifier.

30 64. The method of claim 52 wherein the payment comprises a non-monetary payment.

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65. The method of claim 64 wherein the payment is selected from a group consisting of earned credits, barter chits, a promise to perform a function, and combinations thereof.

5 66. A method of issuing a digital license to a requesting customer for a corresponding piece of digital content, the content originally having been issued to an originating customer, the method comprising:
 receiving a license request for the license from the requesting
customer, the request including originating customer information associated with
10 the corresponding piece of digital content and identifying the originating customer;
 receiving a payment from the requesting customer in
connection with the license request;
 retrieving the originating customer information from the
license request and identifying the originating customer therefrom; and
15 crediting the originating customer for the requested license as
issued.

20 67. The method of claim 66 wherein crediting the originating customer comprises recording the originating customer information in a database for accounting purposes, the database including an entry for each originating customer information, each entry including a count for counting the number of times a license has been issued for the specific originating customer information combination, such recording comprising:
 finding the originating customer information entry in the
25 database corresponding to the originating customer information of the request, or
 creating such sub-entry if none is present; and
 incrementing the count in such entry.

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68. The method of claim 67 wherein crediting the identified originating customer comprises crediting the originating customer according to the count in the entry.

5 69. The method of claim 66 comprising:
 receiving a license request for the license from the requesting customer, the request including originating customer information associated with the corresponding piece of digital content and identifying the originating customer, and a content identification identifying the content, the method further comprising:
10 retrieving the content identification from the license request and identifying the content therefrom;
 the method comprising crediting the identified originating customer according to the identified content.

15 70. The method of claim 69 further comprising recording the originating customer information and content identification in a database for accounting purposes, the database including an entry for each content identification, each content identification entry including a sub-entry for each originating customer information related to such content identification, each sub-
20 entry including a count for counting the number of times a license has been issued for the specific content identification – originating customer information combination, such recording comprising:
 finding the content identification entry in the database corresponding to the content identification of the request, or creating such entry if
25 none is present;
 finding, under such content identification entry, the originating customer information sub-entry in the database corresponding to the originating customer information of the request, or creating such sub-entry if none is present;
 and
30 incrementing the count in such sub-entry.

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71. The method of claim 70 wherein crediting the identified originating customer comprises crediting the originating customer according to the count in the sub-entry.

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72. The method of claim 69 comprising:

receiving a license request for the license from the requesting customer, the request including originating customer information associated with the corresponding piece of digital content and identifying the originating customer, a content identification identifying the content, and content distribution information associated with the corresponding piece of digital content and uniquely identifying the content as distributed by the originating customer, the method further comprising:

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retrieving the content distribution information from the license request and identifying the content as distributed by the originating customer therefrom;
the method comprising crediting the identified originating customer according to the identified content and identified content as distributed by the originating customer.

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73. The method of claim 72 further comprising recording the originating customer information, content identification, and content distribution information in a database for accounting purposes, the database including an entry for each content identification, each content identification entry including a sub-entry for each customer distribution information and originating customer information combination related to such content identification, each sub-entry including a count for counting the number of times a license has been issued for the specific content identification – customer distribution information – originating customer information combination, such recording comprising:

finding the content identification entry in the database corresponding to the content identification of the request, or creating such entry if none is present;

finding, under such content identification entry, the customer
5 distribution information – originating customer information sub-entry in the
database corresponding to the customer distribution information – originating
customer information of the request, or creating such sub-entry if none is present;
and

incrementing the count in such sub-entry.

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74. The method of claim 73 wherein crediting the identified originating customer comprises crediting the originating customer according to the count in the sub-entry.

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75. The method of claim 72 wherein receiving the license request comprises receiving the license request as addressed to a site identified by a site identifier, the site identifier including the content distribution information attached thereto, and wherein retrieving the content distribution information comprises retrieving the content distribution information as attached to the site identifier.

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76. The method of claim 66 further comprising issuing the license.

25 77. The method of claim 66 wherein receiving the license request comprises receiving the license request as addressed to a site identified by a site identifier, the site identifier including the originating customer information attached thereto, and wherein retrieving the originating customer information comprises retrieving the originating customer information as attached to the site identifier.

Figure 1

78. The method of claim 66 wherein the payment comprises a non-monetary payment.

5 79. The method of claim 78 wherein the payment is selected from a group consisting of earned credits, barter chits, a promise to perform a function, and combinations thereof.

10 80. The method of claim 66 wherein the requesting customer is the originating customer.

81. The method of claim 66 wherein the requesting customer is not the originating customer.

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